

Joint Urban Design Expert Statement

We have now been able to view the urban design expert conferencing joint statement. From my review of the document, it appears that there is now general agreement on the majority of matters. The one outstanding matter relates to a difference of opinion in respect to a setback of the building from the front boundary. Mr Burns view is that the building needs to be set back from the front boundary to achieve design excellence, Mr Robinson (Jasmax) does not agree.

I note that Mr Burns has a view of what constitutes “design excellence”. However this would be his individual view/opinion. “Design Excellence” has been long debated in the consent process since the introduction of the Central Area District Plan provisions. No ‘official’ or universally agreed position was reached though the entire life of the District Plan. I note that the draft new District Plan for Wellington has abandoned the term and has adopted other more measurable and understood concepts. Therefore, it is a term that will likely never be ‘resolved’.

In previous applications on this site and in other proposals, I have had resilience and sustainability confirmed as elements that can be included in the overall assessment of “design excellence”. This particular building will be highly resilient and sustainable. As has already been well traversed, the building also responds to future tenant demand in terms of its overall floor plate design. These are all elements have been included in other assessments of “design excellence” that I have been involved in on a number of occasions.

Mr Burn’s view in respect to the setback, I understand from the joint statement, relates to visibility of the cathedral when traveling south on Molesworth Street. There are several points I wish to make in respect to this opinion.

- There are no setback rules in the District Plan. In fact the Plan largely requires buildings to re-enforce the street edge.
- There are no view shafts protecting the view looking south towards the cathedral on Molesworth St.
- The site once was subject to a building line restriction. This has been removed from the title by WCC.
- Vehicle traffic on Molesworth Street travels south the north meaning the building has no effect on views from vehicles travelling Molesworth Street.
- The setback from the boundary would only effect pedestrians on the same side of the street as the building when walking south. The benefit of the building being setback would only come into play for a short section of Molesworth Street for pedestrians on one side of the street. In all other locations there is no effect.

In my view, the wider consideration of the benefits in terms of efficiency, resilience and sustainability achieved by the building, would be significantly reduced by requiring the building to be set back from the boundary. The effects are limited to a small section of street, heading in one direction and would not be of such an extent that the building design should be amended from its current design.

The building can be considered to achieve design excellence in all other tests that can be applied.